

Capitol Restoration Task Force

Minutes from Tuesday, May 24, 2005

Senate Majority Caucus Room

Co-chair Senate Pro Tem Robert Geddes called the meeting to order at 1:43 pm. Attending the meeting were Senators Bart Davis, Joe Stegner, Brad Little, Mike Burkett; Speaker Bruce Newcomb, and Representatives Lawrence Denney, Mike Moyle, Wendy Jaquet and Ad Hoc Nonvoting Members Pam Ahrens and Carl Bianchi. Absent and excused was Representative Julie Ellsworth. Also present were staff members Eric Milstead, Jeff Youtz, Lisa Kauffman; Senators John McGee and Elliot Werk; and Capitol Commission Chairman General Jack Kane and members Steve Guerber and Andrew Erstad.

Co-chair Geddes welcomed those in attendance and reviewed the charge of the committee:

“To study the Capitol restoration master plan, development of related buildings and properties in the Capitol Mall, and possible enlargement of the existing Capitol Building; and to make recommendations to the Pro Tem and the Speaker so as to allow the 2006 Legislature to adopt the necessary concurrent resolution(s) to address the financing and implementation of the Capitol restoration.”

He then briefly went over the wings concept proposed by Senator Stegner and then turned the meeting over to Mr. Bianchi to provide background on what has already been done.

Mr. Bianchi reviewed the history of the restoration project, giving a brief development timeline beginning in 1998 when the Capitol Commission was formed, and updating to the 2002 Session when the restoration project was put on hold due to budget woes. He also presented the original Capitol Restoration Master Plan, which provided a provision for expanded hearing rooms in the building, and went over the 2001 request to the Department of Administration for additional hearing room space, and the 2005 Capitol Annex Approach which provided functional hearing rooms and the use of temporary housing during the remodel of the building. Mr. Bianchi also explained to the committee that the wings concept is not new, it was originally introduced in 1942 by the Department of Public Works but was never acted upon.

Senator Stegner then presented the wings concept, using a picture of the U.S. Capitol as an example, and then directed the committee to an architectural drawing of what our Capitol would look like with the wings added. He also added that the construction costs would be high in order to be consistent with the craftsmanship and materials currently on the building.

Mr. Bianchi reviewed the issues and information needed to assess the building addition concept. He indicated we have to be careful not to compromise the architectural integrity of the building and we need to analyze whether wings can be added to the existing building without doing so. Style options need to be carefully considered as to how they may impact the height, size, and footprint of the wings to maintain architectural balance. We need to consider whether the wings would be connected or free-standing as well as options for dealing with the east and west stairway connections if the wings are added on to them. We

will need to create preliminary drawings showing proposed additions and illustrating the new footprint and how the building will be situated on the grounds and positioned to adjacent streets. We need a ballpark estimate of costs which will include an incremental cost or savings for restoring the existing Capitol, over and above the estimates of the restoration costs. We also need an explanation of how the new wings might affect fire codes and other building requirements and an analysis of whether state workers can remain in the existing building. Finally, we need a rough estimate of a design timeline if the wings are approved during the 2006 Legislative Session.

Representative Jaquet asked Capitol Commission Chairman Kane how much money was in the Capitol Commission account at the present time. Chairman Kane replied that he did not have the exact figures at this time. Department of Administration Director Pam Ahrens replied that there are two different funds for the Capitol Commission. There is approximately \$1.5 million in the Capitol Income Fund, which is used to provide cash for the annual appropriation of the Capitol Commission, including any authorized repair work on the Statehouse. There is about \$100,000 in the Income Fund that could be utilized from the Capitol Building Master Plan Project to reevaluate design work on the building. There is also approximately \$6.5 million in the Capitol Permanent Endowment Fund. This fund provides transfers to the Income Fund and also provides for revenue growth and financial stability for long-term maintenance and repair of the Statehouse.

Speaker Newcomb asked if there was a ballpark figure on adding 80,000 square feet to the existing building. Director Ahrens replied that the cost could be anywhere from around \$300-\$500 a square foot, depending on the materials used and other costs involved, in order to keep with the architectural integrity. Speaker Newcomb commented that if the costs are that high, he is fairly certain the 105 lawmakers would not support it.

Representative Jaquet commented that she feels that the costs are just a bit too high to add wings at the present time but she does see the need to renovate the existing Capitol to make it safer and up to code. She feels that there are options we should be looking into to accommodate that—moving into the Hall of Mirrors to meet, renovating the Ada County Courthouse or even skipping a session and meeting every other year until the existing building is renovated.

Director Ahrens gave an overview of the existing 2000 Capitol Mall Master Plan. Speaker Newcomb asked if the employees in the Capitol could use the office space in the Borah Building and the Ada County Courthouse and he wanted to know how many dollars are we going to spend getting those buildings ready in addition to the cost of the renovation. Director Ahrens replied the Borah Building is in excellent shape and all that needs to be done when someone moves in is to paint, recarpet, and possibly upgrade the wiring for computers and phone systems. Those costs are built in to leasing at this time. The Courthouse would need a lot of work and it would cost approximately \$5-7 million to upgrade and you would have approximately 35,000 square feet available.

Director Ahrens reviewed Capitol restoration projects in other states. The committee discussed dividing up into groups and visiting other Capitols that were similar to ours to see how they accomplished their restoration. It was suggested that the groups also talk to staff members and legislators who were displaced during construction in order to make our transition go more smoothly. Co-chair Geddes asked Mr. Bianchi and Director Ahrens to

come up with a list of Capitols that were similar to ours and then he and Speaker Newcomb will assign members to take a short trip to the other states.

Speaker Newcomb agrees that restoration needs to begin as soon as possible on this building due to safety and health concerns. He is not sure that the wings proposal is where we should go, but he is not opposed to the idea either. However, he feels that we need to take care of the existing needs of this building first and then look at expanding. He also thinks that we should look closely at renovating the Ada County Courthouse which would provide additional needed space until we can expand the existing Capitol building.

Senator Stegner agreed that the renovation of the existing building is a priority, but he's not convinced that the consideration of the wings should be second. He's concerned that if we go ahead and renovate before building the wings that we will have to go back into this building to connect stairs and elevators with the existing ones and in essence will be doing some work twice, which will cost the state more money in the end. He also said we are probably looking at a construction period of 8-10 years which increases inflationary costs and will cause considerable disruption to the displaced employees.

Representative Jaquet reiterated that her district had a hard enough time dealing with the costs of renovating the Capitol and that it would be difficult for her to get support from them on the wings concept when her local school districts are in need of additional funding. Even though we would be bonding for the amount, she still feels that it is a difficult concept to sell to her district when so many other areas such as education and social problems need funding as well. She does feel we need to fix the existing building and would like to focus on that issue rather than expanding at this point in time.

Senator Davis said he was not interested in the short-term solution of only fixing the existing structure; he wants to focus on long-term solutions which include making the building more accessible and having more meeting space for committees. He is concerned about the timetable and the investment so far that has been put into this project, but he does feel that fixing the existing building quickly and starting on construction to enlarge the offices and meeting rooms is the best plan. He feels that this will include remodeling the Ada County Courthouse for legislative use during the construction period. Senator Davis asked Speaker Newcomb to help him understand how his plan will work time wise, and how he is conceptually thinking of the restoration and the wings concept.

Speaker Newcomb stated that he felt you needed to do two things before you started renovating the existing Capitol: 1) renovate the Borah Building so you can move people out of the Hall of Mirrors so the legislature can move in to the Hall of Mirrors which has meeting rooms and space to accommodate a session, and 2) you spend the \$7 million dollars to prepare Ada County Courthouse for additional meeting space while the Capitol is being worked on. And, while you are doing the Capitol renovation you do not make any repairs that will make the future addition of wings impossible. He said the original figure of \$64 million to renovate is probably closer to \$80 million at this time, and if you add the estimated costs of wings to that figure it totals approximately \$150-160 million and he doesn't feel that you will be able to sell that figure to lawmakers when other issues such as state employee salaries and teachers salaries are more important to their constituents. He does feel that the original renovation plan needs to be executed and very soon to prevent further deterioration and decay of the building.

Co-chair Geddes said our priority needs to be taking care of this building but that we need to have some studies done on the wings concept. If we renovate this building, we still have the same footprint which is inadequate to house the large public meetings and staff that now exist.

Senator Davis said that he feels that what Senator Stegner is proposing is in the long-term best interest of the state. He is very concerned about the costs involved but the fact is this building needs repairs immediately but repairing this building does not address the space issue, and he feels that the wings concept would take care of that. He would like the Capitol Commission to look into the practicality of Speaker Newcomb's idea and estimate the costs involved and from there we can go forward. He would also like to tour some of the other Capitols that have been renovated in other states to get an idea of the costs and timelines involved.

Senator Little asked that a spreadsheet be prepared with the square feet we currently have and the square feet that we are estimating we need in the future. He asked that we look at the entire Capitol Mall Development to see if the wings concept fits into that plan, and we need to look at the possibility that the extra space we will be adding would be vacant half the year when we are not in session. He is concerned about the consequences of adding 80,000 square feet, how it will impact parking and street traffic. He supports the wing proposal but wants to see what the big picture looks like and the costs involved.

Senator Burkett asked the Capitol Commission to check and see if there are enough materials available to use on the wings that will match the existing building. He has concerns also that the size of the wings may be too big for the lot and that parking may be very hard to find if we expand this building. He expressed concerns that the renovation itself is going to be costly due to the matching of existing materials and wondered if the Commission has had an architect evaluate the existing renovation plan recently. Due to the costs involved, he is not convinced that the wings concept is the best long-term solution for the state but he is willing to look at and consider all ideas.

Representative Denney agrees with Speaker Newcomb, that our first priority is to renovate the existing building. He feels that if we do that and still allow for the option of the wings proposal we can come back and look at that down the road. He isn't sure the time for that is right due to the costs. He does support the wings idea, but feels that we need to restore the current building first and keep our options open for future plans and ideas.

Co-chair Geddes asked Director Ahrens to go back to the architects and re-evaluate our existing renovation plan and have them look at whether or not there needs to be some modifications if we go out to the east and the west with the wings concept. He also asked for a phased-in approach which would encompass a 3-, 5-, and 7-year plan and logistical proposal to renovate the building and add the wings. He requested that she look into the possibility of retaining the materials needed to build the wings to see if they are available. And lastly, he asked that she and Mr. Bianchi identify some states that have similar buildings and materials and that we look at visiting those states. He would like to send some groups to other states within the next month or so and then come back sometime in July for an update.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:43 p.m.